The Challenge of the Arab Refugees to the Conscience of World Jewry, Pages 2 and 3

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Israel's Hopes and Fears of Russian Intervention

En Route to Moscow

Israel was immensely pleased by the news that Molotov and Mikoyan had turned up at its Embassy in Moscow for the Independence Day party. This was a welcome change from Krushchev's rudeness and gave Israel face in the eyes of the Arab world. The new Russian statement on the Middle East was issued after I had left Israel but I believe I learned enough in private talks to be able to assess the hopes and fears it aroused in Jerusalem.

The positive side of the statement for Israel was that Moscow was prepared to take a responsible part in the Middle Eastern crisis, that its weight was thrown on the side of peace, that it spoke of preserving the independence of Israel as well as the Arab States and that its only commitment on the boundary question was to speak of the need for preventing exacerbation of the situation on the existing demarcation line.

So much was good. But the Israelis—in this respect like the Arabs—are ambivalent in their attitude toward a Great Power agreement on the Middle East. On the one hand, they both fear a situation in which the area might become a new Korea. On the other hand, they both fear that a Great Power agreement might prove to be made at their expense. The Arabs fear the loss of their new found bargaining power between East and West, while the Israelis fear both East and West in their present pro-Arab mood may try to force grave sacrifices on Israel as the price of peace.

Will Moscow Champion 1947?

There is good reason to fear that Moscow may turn up at the conference table as the champion of restoring the 1947 partition plan. This is wholly unacceptable to Israel, and it can safely be predicted that only an international army prepared to fight a long and final struggle could impose that solution upon it. The 1947 plan in effect left Israel split into three parts, strategically indefensible, wide open to enemy attack. No stranger boundaries were ever drawn. The plan left the Jews of Jerusalem dependent on international protection, a protection which was immediately proven illusory as soon as Jerusalem was attacked. There was not one word of protest from the UN when Jordanian forces from the north and east, Egyptians from the south, besieged the Holy City. In addition the 1947 plan envisaged conditions which cannot be restored or created on the Arab side—an independent Arab Palestine linked economically with the Jewish State. Jordan will not give up its part of Palestine or of Jerusalem.

The 1947 plan can no longer be taken seriously. The Powers cannot make joint war on Israel. If Russia espouses the 1947 plan, then its intervention cannot be taken seriously as a peace move but must be regarded as a play for Arab favor. But there is always the possibility that in the London talks something new might be cooked up. For Israel, one advantage in Soviet arms for Egypt has been to increase its standing in London. But the nature of this change may prove treacherous in the long run.

Britain is playing a double game in the Middle East. I know from talks in Israel that even Britishers who are anti-Israel and pro-Arab have swung around to the view that Israel might be a handy instrument for inflicting a serious loss of face on Nasser, perhaps even for overthrowing him. The British hate Nasser. But this does not mean that Israel can count on Britain's firm friendship.

Should Israel Fight for Nuri Said?

On the contrary what Britain would like would be to use Israel to overthrow Nasser and then to make a settlement at the expense of a weakened Israel which would enhance the prestige of Nasser's rival and Britain's long-time puppet, Nuri Said, Pasha of Iraq. Britain would like to prove to the Arabs that the Bagdad pact under Iraqi leadership and with British help can serve their aspirations better than Nasser. This is why the last Bagdad Pact meeting, much to the anger of Paris, was allowed to discuss both the Palestinian and the Algerian questions. France regards Algeria as an internal affair and Britain's action as disloyal to its French ally.

All this is no doubt well understood by the Russians. Their policies have been consistent. They supported the Jews in 1947 on partition and helped them with arms in 1948 because this was a way to help push the British out of Palestine. Today the Russians have been supporting Nasser for the same reason, and there is reason to fear that they would intervene if Israel—with the tacit support of Britain—attacked Egypt. All this but extends the pattern two centuries old of Anglo-Russian rivalry in the Near East.

This is, of course, a most dangerous game in a most inflammatory area. The Powers, if they wish to avoid a world conflagration, must understand the Israeli as well as the Arab position. Israel is prepared to accept the status quo and to live within its present boundaries, small as they are; but not if the Arabs are allowed to continue a policy of neither war nor peace. If the Arabs are not forced to make peace—and only a forced peace can make peace politically feasible for the Arab leaders—then sooner or later Israel will make war rather than live as an armed camp under conditions of boycott, terror and imminent aggression. For if the Arabs have ground for fearing Israel, Israel has even more ground in the long run for fearing the Arabs. The fears of both must be allayed if a secure peace is to be achieved. The path to peace is fairly clear: acceptance of the armistice boundaries, resettlement with compensation by Israel of the Arab refugees, a Great Power guarantee of the status quo, normal trade and diplomatic relations between the Arab States and Israel, neutralization of the Middle East. But all this no doubt is too good to be true.

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New War and New Victory Would Only Perpetuate the Cycle of Hatred

The Road to Peace Lies Through the Arab Refugee Camps . . .

Stockholm

I left Tel Aviv in the warm sunshine and arrived here the evening of the same day in a black snowstorm. Before leaving for Moscow I want to set down my final impressions in Israel and the considerations which I believe must be kept in mind by the world Jewish community if progress is to be made toward peace.

I want first to say that I went to Israel in great anxiety about its future, and left happy with what I had seen and felt. I believe I realize the difficulties which beset it within and without but I do not understand the hysteria clearly reflected in the American papers I picked up here.

I suppose hysteria has its uses, too, but it tends to be expensive. It sometimes achieves results, but this may be at the cost of losing one's way to more permanent and fundamental solutions. It seems to be especially important for the world Jewish community to see the real outlines of the problem clearly. It is in this belief that I want to set down some observations which many may find unpalatable, as most people always find the truth unpalatable. I need not defend myself for doing so, but will say only that I speak out of love for Israel and devotion to that feeling for justice which is the best in our Jewish tradition.

The Tragedy of 1948

The 1948 war between us and the Arabs was tragic in two respects. It was tragic because it was a struggle of right against right. This is the essence of tragedy. Pure evil is not tragic; it is sick. Hitler was not a tragic but a pathological spectacle. Tragedy is when good or normal men do evil despite themselves under the compulsion of necessity, fate or their own natural human needs and aspirations. The Jews had to fight for their lives in 1948 against Arab resistance to the 1947 UN decision partitioning Palestine; if the Jews had not fought they would have been massacred.

But the Arabs had a right to fight, too. From their point of view, their Palestinian homeland was endangered by an alien invasion. They saw themselves swamped and reduced to subordinate status. They feared for their lives and futures. We Jews must see them as a natural and honorable foe; we must learn to understand and forgive if we are to find forgiveness. These were not monsters against whom we fought but men like ourselves, in many cases neighbors of long standing. To see this clearly is to take the first step toward peace.

The 1948 war was tragic in another respect. It was a tragedy for all of us who belong to the Jewish people that in the struggle to make new home for our own refugees, we ended by making refugees of other people. In order to assert our own right to nationhood, to end Jewish homelessness, we made another group of people homeless in a land dear to both of us.

The Price of Victory

Perhaps this might have been avoided. Perhaps if the great powers had not encouraged the Arabs to invade Palestine and defy the UN decision, the transition might have been made in peace. *Perhaps.* But the result was war, and the kind of war in which the victor emerges morally in the wrong because both sides had a right to fight. If the Arabs had won, they would have been merciless and primitive in their revenge; the world would have condemned them, but the *Yishuv* would have been destroyed and its people slaughtered. But we won, and the price of our victory was to find ourselves morally in the wrong. For there in the camps across the borders were new refugees whom this time we had made.

These refugees are a moral millstone around our necks as a people. We must find a way to make new homes for them. This is important for several reasons. The first is to restore our good name in the eyes of the world. The second is that Israel may live; it cannot live normally without Arab friendship; it cannot survive in the long run without Arab good-will. The road to peace lies through the refugee camps. So does the road to Asia. Israel cannot live as a Western outpost, especially at a time when Western power is declining all over Asia and Africa. It can live only as part of the new Asian-African community. To rejoin that community we must resettle the refugees or at least demonstrate to the utmost our sincere desire to do so.

War No Solution

War is no solution for Israel. I believe Israel can win a new war now against all the Arab States combined, and they know it. I believe Israel can hold the borders in the north and east against Lebanon, Syria and Jordan; force a quick evacuation of Western Palestine and the Old City by the Jordanians; take the Gaza strip and deliver a crushing blow at Egypt despite those new Czech arms. Indeed, this is what tempts those who believe this may be Israel's last chance to do so.

It is because Nasser knows this that he did not retaliate except with a few miserable *fedayeen* for the bombardment of Gaza. In terms of military power, the global figures on Arab population are meaningless. The Syrians have 40,000 to 50,000 soldiers poorly prepared for modern war. The Arab Legion of Jordan with its 20,000 men is not much more than a well-trained frontier police. These can easily be held while the 250,000 trained men Israel can mobilize overnight concentrate on Egypt. A new war will not be the last war, in which Egyptians bombed Israel without aerial reprisal; the aerial targets in Egypt are obvious. The damage done Israel's cities would be more than matched by the havoc which can easily be set loose in Egypt. Nasser's regime will not survive a new war and he, who has been described as a bold statesman but a cautious soldier, knows it.

Victory Would Only Sow More Hatred

But what good will a military victory do? This is the sober question which has been cooling the hotheads of Israel. A new victory will make more Arab refugees, increase Arab hatred, deepen Arab national humiliation, sow the seeds for a third round—and this in turn for a fourth. Israel cannot live forever as an armed camp. The Arab world is a morass in which it can hopelessly bog down. In the long run Israel cannot be secure without Arab friendship. Too much devotion and sacrifice has gone into the building of Israel to see it live but a short century like the Crusader kingdom before it.

Then there is the cost of victory to be considered—first, the precious lives of more of our best youth, the seed corn of a

(Continued on Page Three)

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The Lesson in the Crematoria is The Danger in National Egocentricity

. . . Theirs Is A Moral Challenge to World Jewry and Israel

generation. How many lives which might have flowered wonderfully for Israel were snuffed out in the 1948 struggle! Israel is like a big family in which everybody knows everybody else; sorrow is still fresh for those who fell in the *Palmach* and in the *Haganah* and in the *Irgun* and *Lechi.*

Far More Destruction In A Second Round

Then there is the cost of destruction, in the tearing down of so much built up so painfully. The Egyptians this time will wreak far more havoc than they did last time. Both sides will hurt each other more. The problem will be not only to find more money but more energy, to tap new hope, to revive worn spirits. It will, if necessary, be done. Israel will rise from any ashes, but is it worth the cost?

When I see what has been accomplished in the north at the Huleh valley and in the south in the Lachish development and in the Negev; when I see cotton growing and oil beginning to flow; when it is clear that Israel with ten years of peace in its present boundaries can flourish and become self-sustaining, I feel the gamble of war would be wicked.

If you add the cost, not of war, but of present war and defense preparations to the heavy cost of the Arab economic boycott (don't let's fool ourselves that this boycott is not effective), you will see that it would be cheaper not just to help resettle the Arab refugees but to pension them off if thereby we could have peace.

I am not sure we could buy peace that way. I only say we must try. I spoke about this with a very wise Arab in Nazareth and I asked him whether there could be peace between our peoples after all that had happened. "If there can be peace between Israel and Germany after all the terrible things that Germany did," was his reply, "there can be peace between the Jews and the Arabs."

What did he think was necessary for peace? He thought there were two things necessary. One was border changes to end friction where villages and fields have been split, and to save face for the Arab leaders. The other was compensation for the refugees. "Few of them want to return," he said. "They would be glad to take compensation. But you must not give the money to the Arab States. Their politicians would steal it. The money should go directly to the refugees."

Our Future As A People

The final and most important reason for concerning ourselves with the Arab refugee problem is that this will determine our future as a people and Israel's future as a nation. Those who have not suffered may be forgiven if they do not feel sympathy. But it would be unforgiveable if we Jews who have suffered so much from war, conquest, persecution, and homelessness were to fail to find pity for the Arab refugee.

Israel's strength has not been military but moral. I too danced in those indescribably crowded and joyful streets of Haifa the night before Independence Day and thrilled with the military spectacle. But the devotion which built Israel cannot be learned in military manuals. It was a moral strength which enabled Israel to stand off the Arab armies in 1948 when it was more poorly prepared than now. This strength can be lost and it can be lost in the Arab refugee camps.

We must not delude ourselves with comfortable shadow pictures. We must face up to the full human reality of Arab bitterness if we are to find peace again. We dare not let ourselves be corrupted by the easy robber ethics of conquest; at the next turn of the wheel we may be the victims. Too many Jews delude themselves with the easy rationalization that the Arabs "left voluntarily," and that there would be no problem but for their leaders. People flee war when they can; they are bitter when they lose all they had. Is this so hard to understand?

Peace will not be won in a day. The new Russian statement, while hopeful, only opens a new chapter in great power maneuvering. There is time in which we will be tested. The greatest challenge of our history is offered this generation of Jewry and of Israel. It is whether we can rise above war and struggle to treat a foe with magnanimity and *rachmanos* (pity).

A Cross-Roads in Jewish History

We are at a cross-roads in our history as a people. One way leads towards greater militarization and chauvinism; greater hatred and fear of the Arab. This will poison our relations with the Arabs within Israel and even with the Jews from Arab countries—if we do not treat the Arab as an equal we will not treat the Arabic Jew as an equal. Our socialism can easily become like that of Pilsudski's Poland, narrowly nationalist and ugly.

The other way would give us a new and finer generation in which we could find our way to peace. The attitude toward the Arab will determine the spiritual level of Jewry and of Israel. We dare not treat the Arab as human dirt swept out of the land without dirtying ourselves. To treat him with dignity, respect and pity, to extend the hand of friendship and help, would be to rise to all that is best in our past.

When I was in Israel I visited the *kibbutz* of the Warsaw ghetto fighters north of Haifa and saw their exhibition of the struggle of the Jewish resistance against the Nazis. I could stand the relics of the crematoria as one can stand exhibitions of criminal insanity but when I came to the pictures of the brave who fought and fell, the poets whose voices were stilled, the yellowed little papers they put out underground, I wept.

The Lesson for Ourselves

What can be learn from this outburst of human madness so recent and so rapidly being forgotten? Surely nothing is so important as to see the evil ways into which the German people was led by nationalism and by national egocentricity. To see these terrible relics is to see what crimes men may be drawn to commit in the name of their *volk.* This is the warning written in fire, the fire that devoured our brothers.

I see the flowering of the land again and I rejoice in it. I believe that in peace the Law may again go out of Zion to all the earth from our beautiful Jerusalem. But only if we rise to the occasion with compassion for others even when Israel is endangered itself. I would like to see a world Jewish campaign for Arab refugees as a first step in the creation of a new atmosphere. I see in the striving for peace and brotherly relations with the Arabs a challenge and an opportunity worthy of Isaiah's people, capable of creating a new and greater generation of Jewry.

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Was It Intended to Provoke Nasser to War or Make Him Lose Face?

The Truth About The Bombardment of Gaza

The bombardment of Gaza by Israeli artillery provoked a great deal of questioning behind the scenes in Israel. So many different explanations were given as to make one suspect the truth has yet to be told.

Local Israeli commanders have orders which permit them, naturally, to shoot back if fired upon. But orders can be interpreted in various ways. One shrewd Israeli with long military experience said the situation reminded him of the Yiddish writer who published a volume of Shakespeare "as translated and improved" by himself. This man said local commanders along the Gaza strip may have been similarly "translating and improving" Ben Gurion's orders.

Quite by accident, I reached Nahal Oz during the bombardment with a Swedish correspondent and a BBC man. We had been in Beersheba and drove east to visit the frontier settlement. It was almost 5 p.m. and we could hear what sounded like very heavy mortar fire as we approached. We were met by a member carrying a gun who shouted that we must get out because the Egyptians were "zeroing-in," i.e. their shells were beginning to drop on the settlement. Our driver insisted on our leaving.

The Gaza bombardment was the climax of a week in which several Israeli soldiers had been killed while on patrol. One was killed in an ambush on Monday, three more on Wednesday. These killings followed several weeks of shootings from the Egyptian side. The killings merited a military reprisal; there is no reason why the Egyptians should be allowed to shoot up the border with impunity.

But what stirred a great deal of criticism in Israel was the nature of the bombardment next day, which was Thursday. This is the chief market day of the Arabs since it precedes their Sabbath, which is Friday. Israeli shells struck the Gaza marketplace, killing some 40 persons and wounding 100 others, mostly civilians, including women and children of the Arab refugees. The number of shells which fell on the marketplace make it unlikely that this was accidental. According to one source, Ben Gurion ordered the firing stopped as soon as he heard of it.

The Gaza bombardment had two political aspects. From the standpoint of world public opinion, it is bad enough to have Arab refugees across the border without having them shelled by Israeli artillery. Luckily the atrocities committed by *fedayeen* sent across in retaliation after the shelling were so horrifying as to work in Israel's favor.

The other political aspect is not so obvious. The shelling of the Gaza marketplace had the effect of calling Nasser's bluff and hurting him with the refugees. Here he was talking so big and wielding those new Soviet planes and yet he was unable to protect them.

The *Jerusalem Post* of April 18 reported that there were demonstrations against the Nasser regime during the mass funeral of the civilians killed. The *fedayeen* and the exaggerated reports of the Cairo radio about the amount of damage they did in Israel were intended to satisfy protest of this kind.

Additional light on this political aspect of the Gaza shelling was provided by an article in the April 17 issue of *Die Welt*, an independent Essen daily which I picked up in the Dusseldorf airport on my way to Stockholm. In a long article from the Jordan side of the border, a staff correspondent of *Die Welt* said the Arabs were deeply disappointed that Nasser had not been able to retaliate more effectively for the Gaza affair. This correspondent said a delegation of Arab refugees had made an excited protest to the Egyptian Ambassador in Amman.

The correspondent added, "But in leading circles of the Arab capitals they know only too well that despite Russian weapon deliveries open war could lead to catastrophe." Thus the shelling hurt Nasser's prestige.

But if these circumstances provide the clue to the Gaza affair, one may well ask whether it was worth the price. The shelling of Arab refugee encampments or markets is a cynical and murderous business.

The Israeli Parliament ought to demand a full investigation and not rest content with conflicting explanations. There is no more important business in a democratic country than to make sure that the military does not make political decisions of its own, especially the kind which could precipitate war.

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